

Shelton State Courier presents

Maxwell's Crossing

A Literary and Fine Arts Publication

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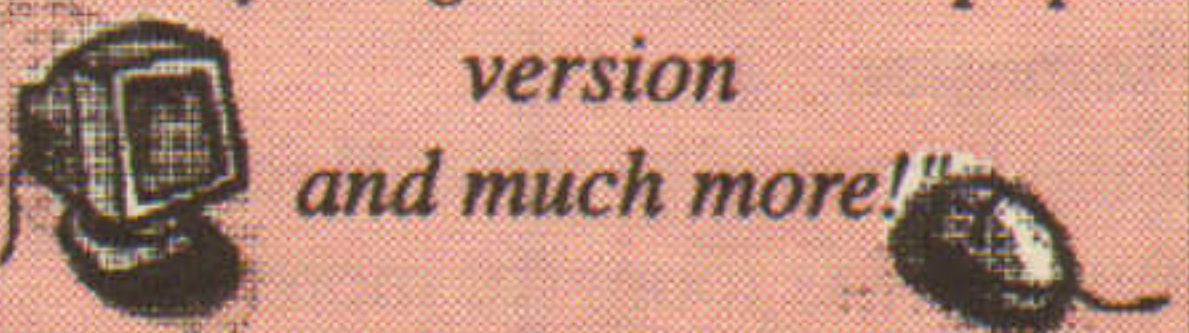
We hope none of you are insulted by the "Redneck Haikus" on pg. 7; if you are, don't tell...

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By Love Beholden? An Artist's Self Analysis

By Jamie Ryland

What can make a child who is outgoing and never meets a stranger become shy and introverted? I am that child.

I am now a young woman who hides some of her emotions inside, fearing to let them loose. Instead, the emotions come out when I place graphite onto a piece of paper and attempt a work of art.

I was at a loss as to why I had become shy until I spoke with my mother. Here is my theory that is probably fact. When I was born, I was 11 weeks premature, so as I grew up, my cognitive and motor skills developed more slowly than other children my age. Hence, my difficulty in doing and learning like my classmates. I had to take special classes like six years of speech therapy and I had to be tutored in math and reading. Therefore, I was dubbed "retarded." This, of course, affected me.

When I was in preschool and early elementary, I was a very out going child who would talk to anyone but, starting in my later elementary days, my self-esteem and confidence in myself started to deteriorate. I have in a way withdrawn myself from other people, scared to talk

Self Analysis cont'd on pg.4



Sketch by Jamie Ryland

A Prayer for Rain, a short story by Faiza Ferdousy

"Maisha!"

There was no reply. Her nanny patiently waited, and tapped her fingers on her cane.

"Maisha! Come down right now!"

"Will you tell Grandmama?" Maisha asked.

"Yes."

"Then I won't come down," Maisha replied stubbornly.

"You'll come down even if I have to cut down this tree!" shouted her ayah.

"You wouldn't dare!" said Maisha, horrified. "Grandmama would kill you. Besides, you don't know which one I'm in."

"Oh, for the love of Kishanji and all the gods, come down. Come down before your grandmother comes looking for you herself," implored the ayah.

"Ha! Ha! I shall tell Grandmama you yelled at me and we'll see who gets in trouble. . ."

"MAISHA!" came a shrill call from inside the house.

"Now you've done it! Now you've done it!" cried her ayah.

Maisha scrambled out of the mango trees. She jumped down from one branch

to the next. She was careful not to drop the ripe mango in her hand. But not careful enough to keep her school uniform from tearing.

"Oh why did I have to be the one to look after the little devil?" wailed the hysterical, old ayah. "Why did I ever set eyes on her? I shall be cast out into the streets! I shall die of hunger! Oh Kishanji, save me and I will pray at your temple everyday."

Maisha handed her the mango and ran towards the house. Her nanny hobbled after Maisha with the mango and the cane. By the time she passed through the garden gates, Maisha had already disappeared inside the massive, wooden doors of the house.

"Where is Grandmama, Jagjit?" Maisha asked the Sikh doorman.

"Madam is taking her tea in her room upstairs, little mem."

"Is she really upset?" Maisha asked as she started to run up the stairs.

"Madam is not in her finest of moods," laughed the Sikh. "But you have upset madam more in the past."

Maisha slowed down when she heard this. She wasn't sure whether the

pounding in her chest was from running or fear. Maisha wondered what her punishment might be. Grandmama never hit her. If Maisha had a choice, she would have preferred a beating to the punishment Grandmama usually gave. No, Grandmama was a much more creative chastener. Maisha remembered the time she had to milk the cow for a week, just because she put a tiny bit of itching powder in the gardener's clothes. She smiled at the thought. It really was something to see the proud, old Goan jump up and down. Maisha could have sworn even Grandmama had smiled.

She put aside the fond memories as she came up to a richly carved door. The usually long staircases seemed surprisingly short. Maisha knocked softly on the dark wood. Grandmama did not like loud noises.

"Come," replied a soft voice from inside. It was hard to associate this voice with the voice that had called into the garden.

"You wanted to see me?" Maisha asked as she opened the door.

"Yes, yes. Come in child," said

Rain cont'd on pg. 5

My Would-Be Pet: A True-Life Vignette By Ben Herdman

It was about a week ago when a friend of mine showed me the spider living in her bathroom sink.

"He's been in there for about three days and he can't get out. He gets really pissed when you turn the water on," she laughed. She demonstrated this for me. "Sure enough," I confirmed her.

Given that the spider couldn't get out of the sink I took a very close look at it. I had never eyeballed an arachnid so closely. It was the size of a silver dollar, including the leg span, and its body was punctuated with brown hairs blended with a small white circle. "Beautiful," I said. "What are you going to do with him?" Celesta shrugged and replied, "I don't know. Hey, do you want him?" "Sure," I said. "But I'll have to take that issue up with Ma and Pop. I still live with them, you know. Hold on to it and I'll let you know something tomorrow."

"Very well."

On my way home I thought about names for the little critter. "A child should reflect his parent," I said to myself. "He's creepy but cute, endearing but dangerous, and he may very well bite if you sit next to him. Eureka!" It came to me. "I shall call him 'Mini-me.'"

When I reached home Ma was making her special tomato sauce.

"Ma," I began as I walked through the door, "I found a cool pet and I was wondering if..." "Absolutely not," she interrupted. "You know I'm allergic to everything, Benny." "But it's not a furball of any kind," I contested. "It's

about to try again when the phone rang. "Excuse me, Benny," said Ma reaching for the phone. She would talk to her worst enemy rather than listen to my pleas. I stood in the kitchen, still flashing her the puppy

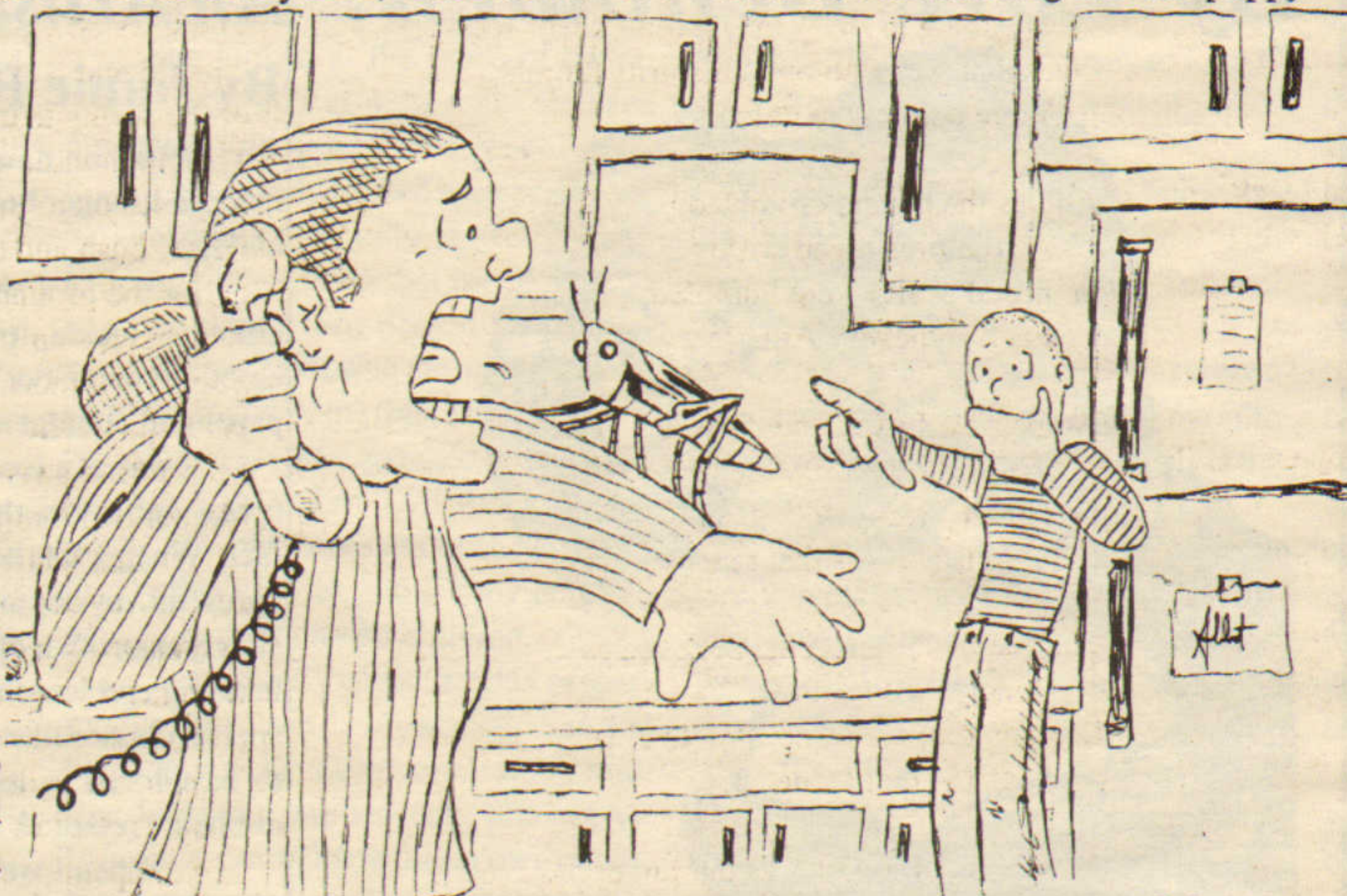
this call.

Suddenly I saw a huge bug on her right shoulder. It freaked me out so much I was speechless! I recoiled slowly to the corner, making sure not to let it out of my sight. When Ma noticed my awkward behavior and the horrified look on my face she didn't know what to make of it right away. "Benny, you look odd. Are you toking again?" With all the continence I could muster I whispered "N-n-no, Ma" and pointed to the bug with a shaky finger. "Look!"

It wasn't but two seconds when she came face to face with what now appeared to be a gigantic grasshopper. As soon as they locked eyes, Ma began to jump and dance frantically around the room in terror. "Help, Ben, help!" she cried. "Get it off of me!" At that moment, it leaped to the floor about two feet away from me. "Holy me!!" I bolted out the door, leaving Ma alone with the creature. I listened in-

tently from the other room. Ma was knocking things over and pelting away at the grasshopper with one of her shoes. After a lot of noise she finally smashed it.

I returned to the kitchen to see how she was doing. Ma was sitting down shaking a bit. "I never saw a 4-inch grasshopper before. By the way, good one, hero!"



Suddenly I saw a huge bug on her right shoulder. It freaked me out so much I was speechless! I recoiled slowly to the corner making sure not to let it out of my sight.

Illustration by Abbot

a spider," I said with crossed fingers. "Oh, for heaven's sake, no way. You had a better chance asking for a cat or something like that. I couldn't sleep knowing that thing is in the house." I figured I would use the sad puppy dog eyes on her. Sometimes that worked. "Please, Ma." She shook her head sternly. "Absolutely not." I was

dog eyes. She gave me an up-nod shake of the head as she carried her phone outside to talk.

As I plotted my next line of argument, Ma returned inside still talking away on the phone. I looked at her as she leaned forward onto the butcher-block table in the middle of the kitchen, appearing determined to remain on

Maxwell's Crossing

Shelton State Courier

Editor: Jenifer Wallace

Publisher: Dr. Jim Kenny

Business Manager: Jenifer Wallace

The *Shelton State Courier* is a "campus newspaper" written and produced with the help of students.

Among other functions, it is intended as a vehicle for student expression and all students are urged to participate with submissions of written and artistic material.

The college seeks to fulfill the statement for academic freedom in working with the students in the production of this paper:

"The college seeks to provide an atmosphere conducive to open and honest intellectual inquiry in any college forum which is appropriate for dialogue and student participation. The students should feel free to exercise the right to dissent within limits of decorum and good taste."

All publications are subject to review by the Publications Action Group, which has been delegated the responsibility to review all college publications for content and accuracy.

Future Issues

This, the second issue of *Maxwell's Crossing* is presented as a supplement to the regular news-format editions of the *Courier*. The publication is printed before the fall semester exams to be presented in the *Courier* boxes for reading through the exam period and through the first week of the spring semester.

We feel the first issue of *Maxwell's Crossing* and the response to the call for creative work for this edition warrant future issues. But there is room for more original work and we urge students, faculty and staff and friends of Shelton to save their creative endeavors for the edition next year.

We hope you enjoy the submissions.

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On That Day

By Catherine Walters

I pray for the ones who were on those planes,
Not knowing and scared, and helplessly insane.

I couldn't imagine the pain they felt,
Innocent men, women, and children that couldn't be helped.

Running and jumping, many thoughts in mind,
Some realizing that it was just their time.

As the buildings collapsed, the sky turned black,
Never thinking that terrorists would attack.

Heroes and victims, wondering how to cope,
Many of our citizens have lost all hope.

Now taking control, young men and women are called to fight,
Representing our country, with all their might.

Pleading for justice, with our heads held high,
They forced us to put our troops up in the sky.

Waiting and watching and hoping for the best,
Praying for those whom now may rest.

Supporting those risking their lives for us,
Their bravery and love for our country, we trust.

God has a reason for what happened on September 11,
He wanted all the victims with him up in heaven.

No Condemnation

By Ernest Metcalf

When I look right now . . .
At you somehow . . .
I don't see you anymore.
I can't remember all the things
I know you were before.

I know your name
Is still the same . . .
But someone new is there,
There is love flowing out from you
That reaches everywhere.

There's something new
Has happened to you—
To which nothing can compare.
It has to be the love of God
Has pulled you from Satan's snare.

I hope and pray
That in some way
I was a light to you.
That it may be God's love in me
Was able to show through.

Before Him right now
I humbly bow
My head in adoration
And thank Him that he came to us
With grace, not condemnation.

The Day America Cried

By Seth E. Curtis

It was the day America cried
A day we shall long remember
A day of terror from the sky
It was the eleventh of September

Desperate voices of loved ones calling
Speaking to those they would never see again
Ones that we, with broken spirits falling,
Were helpless to defend

And as the towers crumbled
As the fires raged within
So proud hearts were humbled
Each and every American

Among confusion and disbelief
We witnessed afar and near
Our hearts heavy with grief
From the words that reached our ears

Thousands of innocents believed to have perished
Under cruel metal and stone
Leaving only their memory to cherish
That and that alone

And though these words our anger has grown
Against the foe
Though he, his face, has not yet shown
And might we shall stand with God as our guide
He will rue the day America cried

I Don't Want To Be a Poet

By Anonymous

I don't want to be a poet!
Don't make me.
I'd rather be a novelist,
Or a writer of short fiction,
Or a night watchman.
I'd rather calm dogs for a living,
Or raise cats.
Yes, even a journalist would suit me
Fine.
I'd rather have an expensive watch—
21 jewels—
And a bracelet and a ring
Than sing.

But you,
You ineffable spirit
Tugging at my loin strings,
Filling my head with dissipation
After each contrived line.
Where's your sense of economics?
The free enterprise system,
Little sprite?

Go 'head . . .
Take it all away from me.
Leave me stripped to my
Regenitaliated self.
Feed me from the plate of ectoplasm.
I'll eat the big one,
And curse, curse.

First Tee, Chandler Park Detroit, 1968

By Anonymous

The trees down the first fairway
Are old and tangly and smelling
of the spring that it is.
The clubhouse, with a clock in its brow,
Rambles on to the left and the right behind me.
Grass, bush and tree
Cover the grounds all 'round.
The green—an Indian mound—
Slopes in a morning fog,
With the traffic behind providing a friendly
Murmuring swish.
Men of Scotland,
(Black and white in Detroit),
Officious and learned, reminiscent of tweed
Crackle their bags and jingle the air
With irons.
The sound of dimes buying coffee.
Crunch, the delicious crunch of spikes on asphalt
And tart click of spikes on the sidewalk.
One dimpled ball awaits in my front pocket.
I'm chattering from the vernal breeze
And the intensity of first tees.
Well met with new friends.
Palm on my driver's insigniated grip,
The club head does what's left
And I'm out to the right,
But in play—
A shot left, as they say.
The grass,
Sky,
Day...
The ancient game.

A Child at Night

By Seth E. Curtis

To a child the darkness is most frightening
The little one feels the grip of terror tightening
As shadows lurk behind the lightning
And the thunder booms his fear is lightening
The covers offer but poor defense
Against his demons that grown immense
And the shroud of night, like an enclosed fence
Suffocates, emaciates, and destroys all sense
The winds howl; Devils growl
And outside, unseen things prowl
His screams of fright that fade into the night
And linger on the rays of dawn's early light
With the coming of day, you think it would end
Yet, here, in fact, is where it begins
For throughout the day that child contends
With the thought of wrestling with night again

Shelton State Music Department Annual Christmas Concert

**Thursday Night, December 6,
7 p.m. in the atrium of the Martin campus**
*The Concert will feature the Shelton Singers,
under the direction of Glinda Blackshear, and
Dr. Mark Brown, with accompaniment by Syble
Coats,. Also featured will be the Shelton Jazz
Band under the direction of Dr. Alan Blackshear*

There is no admission fee to the concert

Alumni Christmas Party

The Shelton State Alumni Association will host its annual Christmas party on Monday, December 10, at 5:30 p.m. at Ruby Tuesday Restaurant, 311 Merchants Walk, Tuscaloosa. Reservations for the Dutch-treat dinner may be made by calling Shelton State's alumni office, (205) 391-2252. All current and former students, faculty and staff as well as friends of the college are invited.

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It's All In The Mind, essay by Sue Morris

It's all in the mind. There are times when doubts cause uncertainty, but in the end desire shows. The things we long for will one day become a reality if determination and hard work are applied. Success does not wait for goals to be obtained; it actively pursues them. It is a condition of the mind, a state of being, a place of situation and circumstance. Overcoming obstacles, setbacks and minor defeats cause success to thrive.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines success as "having favorable results, the gaining of wealth or fame." The obvious outward appearances of success are easily recognized as wealth, fame, material possessions, and popularity. Success is not a characteristic or trait a person is born with. It is something one must strive to attain. It should be looked upon as a goal to work toward, and once accomplished, success should be enjoyed. The display of wealth and material possessions is commonly viewed as success in our country.

There are many other ways to examine success. To a poverty-stricken person, success could mean having enough money to pay his bills; someone who lives with chronic pain may view success as being able to experience a day pain-free; an athlete could describe success as winning. Success is not always

something that is obvious to the outside world. It doesn't always parade around with a large sign that reads, "success is here." Sometimes it is in the quietness of the heart, found in the small things so easily taken for granted by a busy world. Depending on the situation in which a person finds himself, success varies greatly from person to person.

Success is not a tangible item. It is not something to be held or purchased but rather something within each person. Although many people have the ability to succeed, some never attain their full potential. As with anything worth having, success requires hard work, desire, and determination, despite the obstacles. Success does not accept defeat, for it remains focused on the final result, not the minor setbacks. Success is not an object waiting for an owner but a dream waiting to come true.

Almost anything can be achieved if a person is determined to succeed. Success begins in one's mind. It is a desire deep within to reach a personal level never before attained. Success is work in action, a collection of accomplishments and setbacks. It is the reward of strong effort, desire, and a will to finish. It begins as a dream and evolves into a miracle. The will to succeed comes from within.

Self-analysis cont'd from pg. 1

to someone with the fear that they would think I was stupid.

Instead of socializing, I'll sit in the back of a room and draw pictures because I find safety in my drawings. Some people who have looked at my drawings say that they have an attitude to them, or a certain look or edge. My mother had told me that I have a "hidden

attitude" and that my hidden emotions reflect through my drawings. I personally don't see it, but who knows? My mother said, "Introverted people are like a gift; you don't know what's inside the package until you take the time to unwrap it. Only those who take the time to unwrap the gift will get to enjoy the beauty."

Today, I am learning that my art can be a means of communicating and socializing with others.

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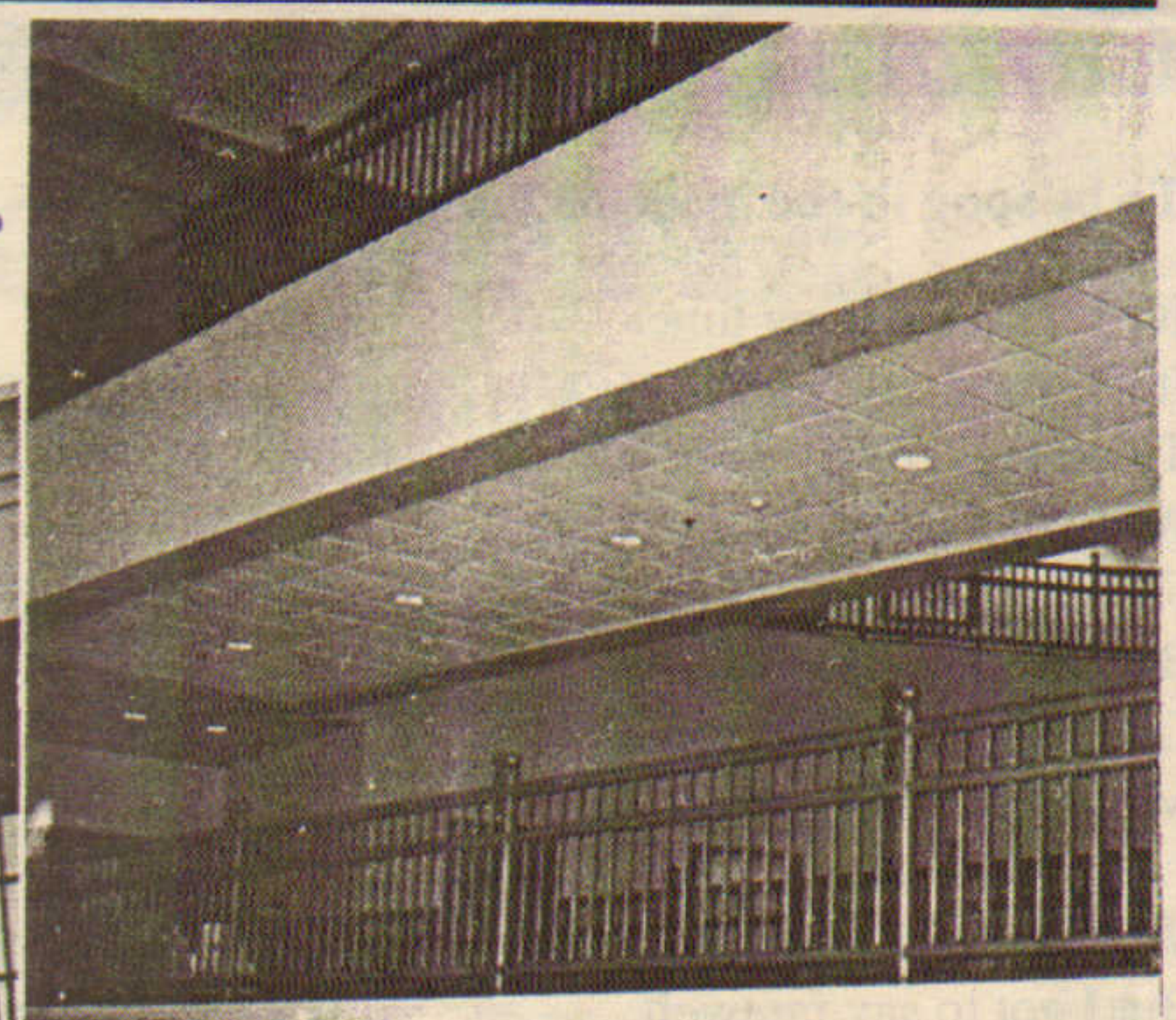
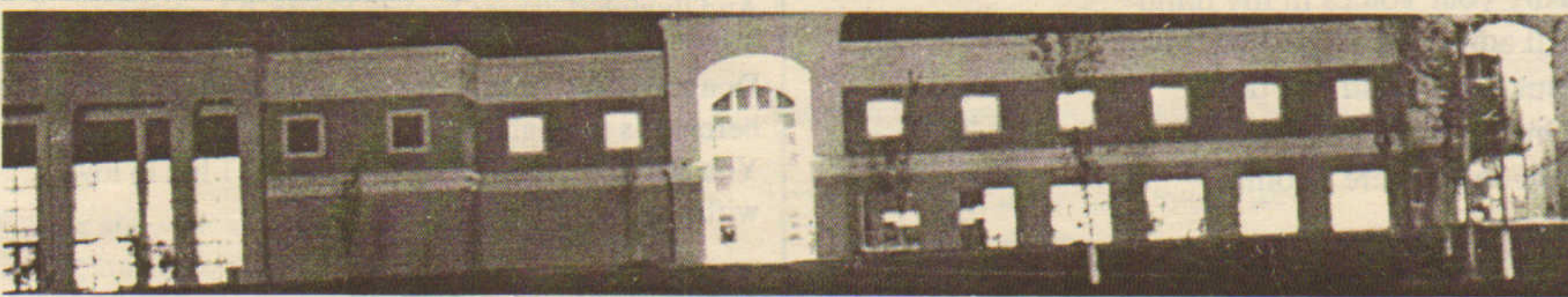
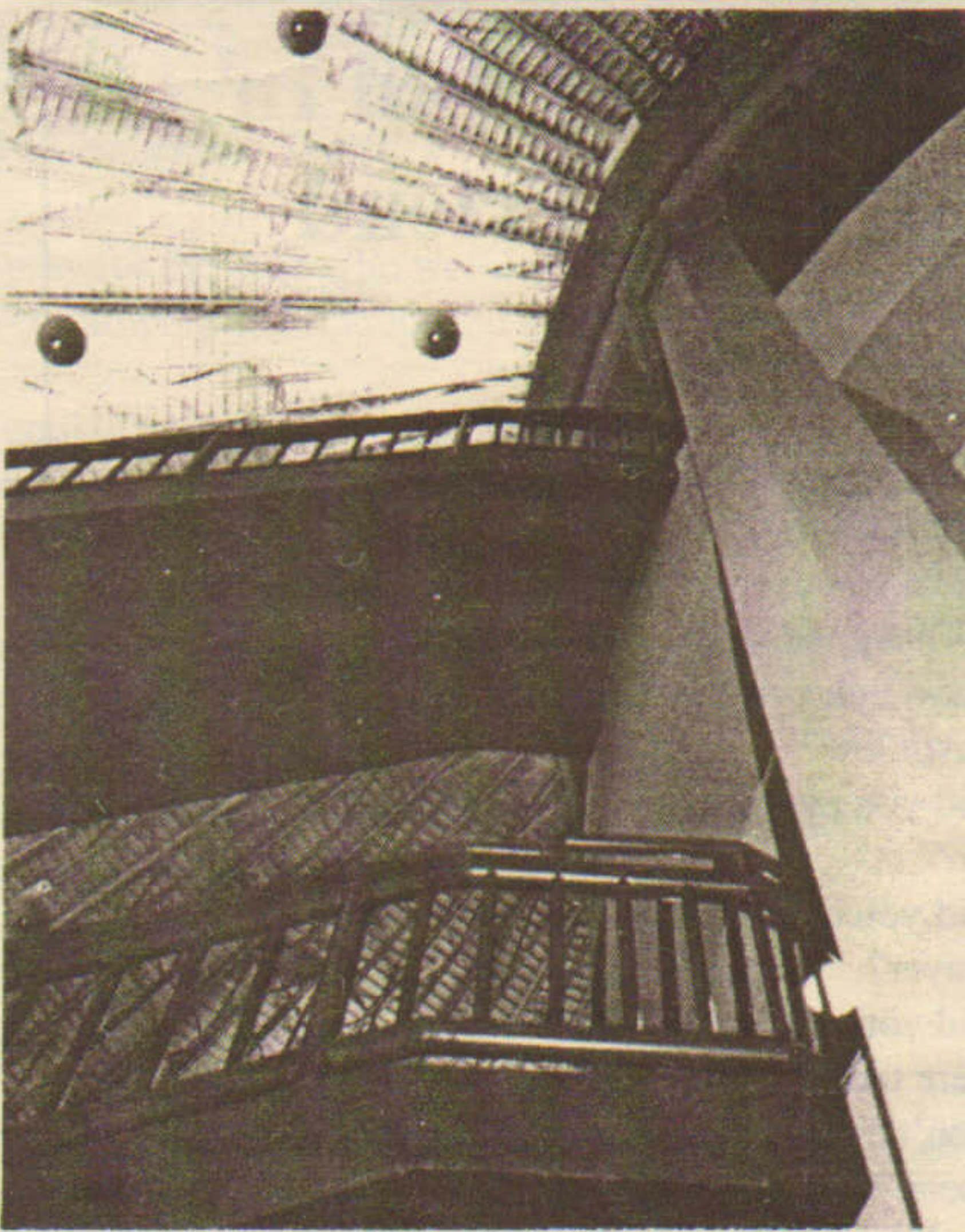
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College Geometry By the Courier Staff



Rain cont'd from pg. 1

Grandmama. "You've taken long enough about it."

"I'm sorry," Maisha said as she stepped into the room. She crossed the white, marble floor into the balcony, which looked out over the Ganga. White curtains parted the room from the balcony. Grandmother surrounded herself with white. Her room was full of white furniture and white flowers. Even the paintings on the wall had a pervading sense of whiteness. Maisha had asked about this one day. Grandmama had said something about widows having to wear white. Maisha couldn't remember.

"Sit down," said the wrinkled, old lady pointing to a chair across from her. The old lady scrutinized Maisha for a long moment.

"I see you've been climbing trees," she said at last.

"How did you know?" asked Maisha.

"I know everything," said grandmother with a smile. "Here, have a laddo. A friend sent these from Calcutta."

"I'm sorry I climbed up the mango tree," said Maisha as she put a sweet laddo in her mouth. "I couldn't help myself. I saw the biggest, reddest mango."

"Don't talk with your mouth full," scolded Grandmama. She picked up her teacup and took a long sip. "And I suppose you couldn't help yourself from swimming in the river?"

I even went through the trouble of

drying my clothes, Maisha thought angrily.

"And a little squirrel has told me you've been playing football with the boys," added grandmother.

Maisha slumped in her chair. This was it. She could negotiate her way out of one, even two crimes. But to sweet talk her way out of three was something even she couldn't do. She could have gotten away with swimming in the river and climbing the mango trees. But playing football with the farm boys was completely out of bounds for her. Girls simply didn't play football according to Grandmama. Maisha knew she would spend the rest of her life playing the sitar and reading Tennyson. She waited for her grandmother to speak.

"I would lecture you about the appropriate behavior of a young lady, if I did not have more important news," said grandmother, sipping her tea. "Your father called today. He wanted to talk to you, but, unfortunately, we were unable to locate you at that time. It seems he is coming. We are to meet him at the airport tomorrow afternoon."

"How long will he stay?" asked Maisha, uneasily.

"Not long. Two, three days at the most. He says he is coming to take you with him."

"Take me where?" asked Maisha, horrified.

"Take you to his home in England," replied grandmother.

"Am I to go live with him? Have you told mother?"

"I have not been able to talk to her yet. Yes you are to go and live with him. But she did leave you in my care and jurisdiction. Ultimately, I shall decide."

Maisha sat motionless for some time.

"Will you let me stay if I told you I didn't want to go?" asked Maisha at length.

"You know I can't, Maisha. I shall die soon, and who will look after you then? You're fortunate your father wishes to take you," replied grandmother.

"I don't want to go," said Maisha crying. "I want to stay. I don't have any friends in England. Who will my ayah take care of when I leave? You said there were no mango trees in England. Please don't make me go."

Maisha ran to her grandmother.

"There, there," said the old lady, wiping Maisha's tears with her white sari. "I don't think your nanny would mind retiring. You shall make new friends in England. And I will send a dozen mango saplings for you to plant. How does that sound?"

Maisha continued to cry. She did not know much about England. She knew it was an island on the other side of the world. She knew it rained there a lot. She knew she didn't have any friends there. But she also knew she didn't have a choice. Maisha already hated England. There was nothing for her to do but keep crying.

"There, there now," said Grandmama. "No need to start the monsoon on my balcony. Go find Jagjit. Go

with him to the market and buy as many mangos as you wish. Run along now."

Grandmama nudged Maisha along and Maisha didn't resist. Although she was upset about her father coming, the prospect of buying all the mangos in the market was too enticing. The thought of all those ripe, red mangos made her mouth water. Maisha turned around to look at Grandmama when she reached the door. But Grandmama was already looking at a piece of paper. Maisha closed the heavy door quietly as she went out. She didn't want to disturb Grandmama.

The old lady sitting on the balcony looked at the scrap of paper. She sighed as she put the paper aside. She would think about it later. The old lady turned her attention to the sky instead. She frowned. The sky was empty when rain clouds should have covered it. The monsoon winds were unusually late this year. If it didn't rain soon the crops would die and there would be trouble. Hunger would turn the villagers into rioting mobs. The old lady had maintained relative peace with the villagers since her husband's death. But she had no experience with hungry, cropless villagers. The old lady wished it would rain. She shook her head irritably. Wishes did no good. Besides, there was a more important issue at hand.

She turned her attention to the piece of paper again. It had "TWA flight 468 at 4:30 p.m." written on it. The old woman was of two minds about her son-in-law's

Rain cont'd on pg. 8

Curtain Closing Time A Song: By Ben Herdman

To be sung in the mode of Johnny Cash

It's curtain closing time
It's time to say good-bye
To all you creepy critters
And your voices in my mind
I'll admit we've had our fun
But it's all said and done
One bullet in the chamber
Mr. Jesus, here I come

Well, I might just go to Hell
But I got to say farewell
To my evil alter personality
So long to you as well
You've been my best good friend
And we've done tons of crazy things
So hang on to your hat
'Cause, evil buddy, this is it

Dancin' 'round with psycho circus midgets in
my bed
Speedin' down the highway with a price upon

my head
There ain't no turnin' back, I got the po-po on
my tail
Curvin' and a servin' as the chevy hits the rail

I popped out my seat, gave the birdie to the
police
And I ran like hell into the woods to give'em a
little tease
My hand clenched to my .45 and I pressed it to
my head
I looked the devil right in the eyes and this is
what I said

It's curtain closing time
It's time to say good-bye
To all you creepy critters
Any your voices in my mind
I'll admit we've had our fun
But it's all said and done
One bullet in the chamber
Mr. Jesus, here I come

Don't Ever Fall In Love, My Friend

By Anonymous

Have you ever loved someone who you knew
didn't love you?
Have you ever thought of crying, but then thought,
"What good will it do?"
Have you ever seen him dancing with the lights
down low?
Did you ever whisper to yourself, "God I love him
so?"
Did you ever look into his eyes and say a little
prayer?
Did you ever look into his heart and wish that you
were there?
Don't ever fall in love, my friend, you'll find it
doesn't pay.
And though it causes broken hearts, it happens
every day.
Don't ever fall in love, my friend, you'll get hurt
before it's through.
You see, my friend, I ought to know. I fell in love
with you.

Holiday Fashion Show

Shelton State Senior Cosmetology Students
Will Present a Christmas Fashion Show on
Thursday, December 6, at 6 p.m. in
Room 2255 on the Martin Campus

All of the students are from Tuscaloosa and
Fayette Counties. Cosmetology students will
be responsible for the clothes, makeup, and
hair of the models.

Mrs. West

Are you lost, lonely, or confused? Do you need
answers? Mrs. West can help!

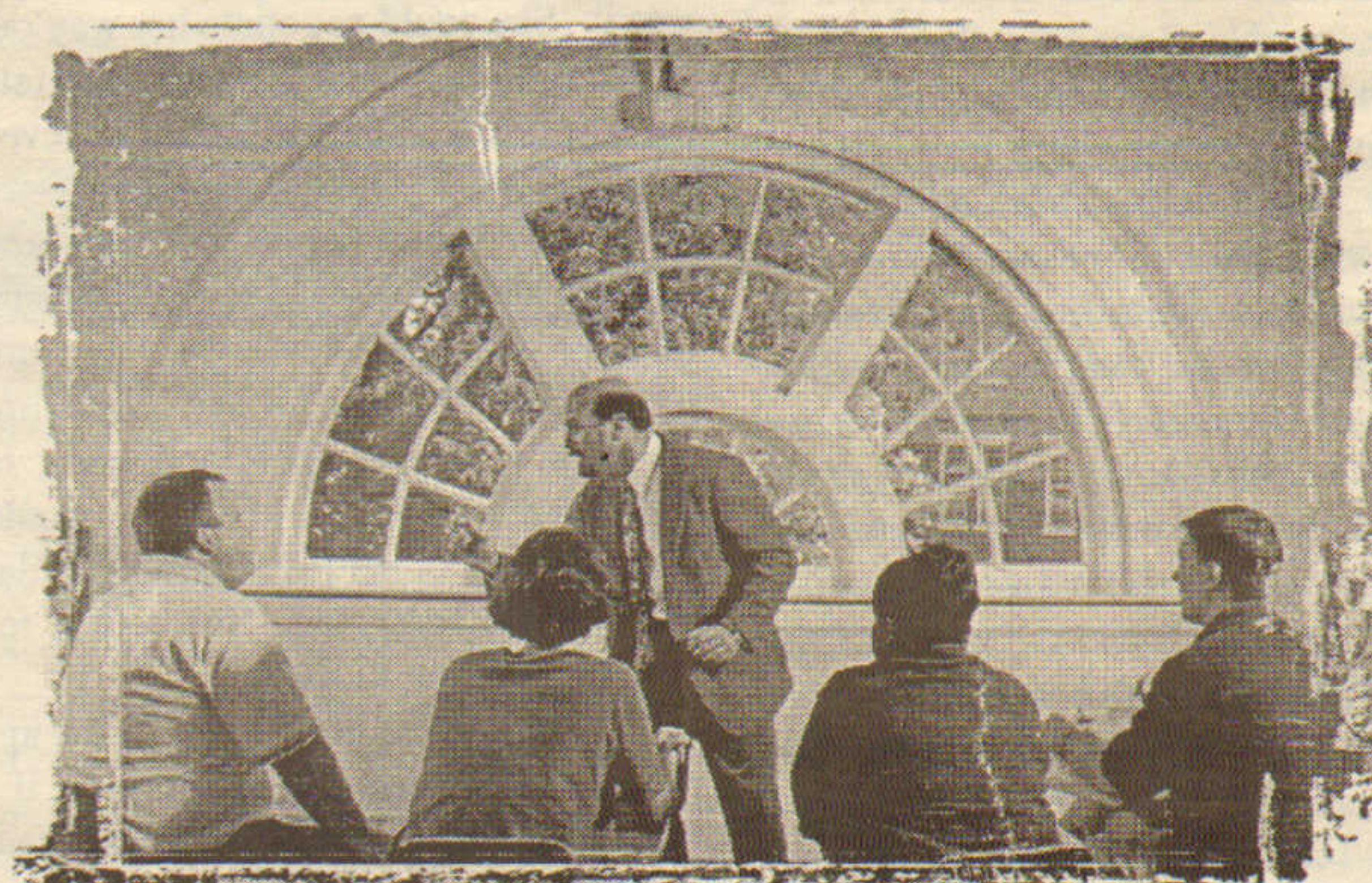
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Redneck Haiku, Internet folk poetry By Anonymous**Beauty**

Naked in repose
Silvery silhouette girls
Adorn my mudflaps

Remorse

A painful sadness
Can't fit big screen TV through
Double-wide's front door

Options

Unemployment's out.
Hey, maybe I can git on
Disability

Blaze

Distant siren screams
Dumb-ass Verne's been mowing with
Gasoline again

A New Moon

Flashlights pierce darkness
No nightcrawlers to be found
Guess we'll gig some frogs

Exuberance

Joyous, playful, bright
Trailer park girl rolls in puddle
Of old motor oil

Alone

Seeking solitude
Carl's ex-wife Tammy files for
Restraining order

Desire

Damn, in that tube-top
You make me almost forget
That you're my cousin

Hatred

I curse the rainbow
Emblazoned upon his hood
That damn Jeff Gordon

Offerings

Tonight we hunger
Grandma sent grocery money
To Robert Tilton

Drama

Set the VCR
Dukes of Hazzard Marathon
Starts at 9 O'Clock

Deprived

In WalMart toy aisle
Wailing boy wants rasslin' doll
Mama whups his ass

No Signal

White noise, buzzing static
Call Earl; the satellite dish
needs new descrambler

Impounded

Sixty-five dollars
And cyclone fence keeps me from
My El Camino

Gathering

In early morning mist
Mama searches Circle K for
Moon Pies and Red Man

Pride

Grinning, he displays
The nine hundred beer cans that
Fill his pickup bed

**the summer
functionary****By Anonymous**

My white shirt clings to me in jest.
"Who are you kidding?" is what it
suggests.
My motorcycle — a small one—
throttles back nevertheless,
one deep, mean-hearted roar.
The staff skurries around me
in dresses and suits:
Amazing brains
that flail a wretch like me.
I labor in my cubicle
And every thirteenth sentence is worth
my wasted time.

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Rain cont'd from pg. 5

request. No, it was more a demand than a request. He wanted his daughter. He had every right to her as her father. But the old lady didn't see him as the child's father. The man had left his daughter and wife to study abroad. He went halfway around the world to England. He could have fallen off the face of the earth for all the old lady cared. Sayukta, the old lady's youngest daughter, had waited two years for her husband to return. She had waited, and fallen in love with another man. Before the old lady could do anything about it, she had a runaway daughter and an abandoned grandchild.

Sayukta blamed the old lady for the unsuccessful marriage. The old lady blamed herself. She did not think a man's lust for knowledge would overcome his lust for life. She had been wrong.

The old lady took the child's presence as a punishment. She had thought that with the marriage of her youngest daughter she would be free to retreat from life. She had spent years sorting out marriage and money between her children. All this she had done patiently in the hopes of spending her last years in peace. But fate was against her.

Those first years with the little child had been hard. The girl was stubborn and willful. At the age of two, these were not qualities to recommend a child. That was

four years ago. The child was still stubborn and willful. None of her own children were as unruly as this child. This girl was always testing the boundaries. Always trying to see how far she could go. The old lady supposed this came from the father's peasant blood.

She did not dislike the child. She just didn't have the patience or energy to raise the child. After raising 8 children of her own, the old lady wanted a little rest.

She looked at the piece of paper. TWA flight 468 at 4:30 p.m. Perhaps now she could have a little peace.

The old lady looked back across the darkened sky. If only it would rain. Before falling asleep that night, she did an extra prayer. She prayed for rain.

The next morning the old lady woke up to the sound of the thunder and rain. It rained all day. The parched river banks swelled with water. All the villagers, young and old, came out of their houses to give thanks to the gods. They sang and danced in the rain like children.

The old lady spent that day preparing for her son-in-law's arrival. She had her fattest goat slaughtered along with five ducks and one peacock. She had her fisherman catch fish from her own ponds. The local sweet-maker was ordered to make seven different kinds of sweets. Her son-in-law would come home to a feast.

At four o'clock the old lady sat with the child in the back of the car, driving to the airport. It was four years ago when she had last seen her son-in-law. She wondered if he had changed much.

"Madam is looking tired today," said Jagjit. "Is madam not feeling well?"

"No, I'm fine. I'm just anxious to see my son-in-law," replied Grandmama.

"Oh, lookie! The elephants are swimming in the river!" exclaimed Maisha. "Why are their noses so long?"

"I don't know child," replied grandmother.

"I thought you said you knew everything," said Maisha giggling. "Tell me why their noses are so long. Tell me! Tell me!"

"Not now Maisha," answered Grandmama. "I'll tell you later if you're good girl. Jagjit, how much farther is the airport?"

"Not far madam. Ten perhaps twelve more kilometers," said Jagjit. "I'm afraid we will be late. We would be there by now if it weren't for this wretched rain."

"Don't say that!" scolded Grandmama. "We must give thanks for the rain. Besides, these planes are never on time."

"Yes madam," said Jagjit.

As the car slowly rambled along the muddy road, it began to rain harder. The

gentle pitter-patter of water became a blanket of pounding water. Raindrops hitting the car sounded like drumbeats from some ancient ritual. The old lady could not remember rain like this. She thought that perhaps she had prayed too hard. She looked through the window straining to see something. All she saw was an impenetrable wall of water. Just as she made up her mind to tell Jagjit to stop the car, she saw blurred headlights and heard a blaring, high-pitched sound.

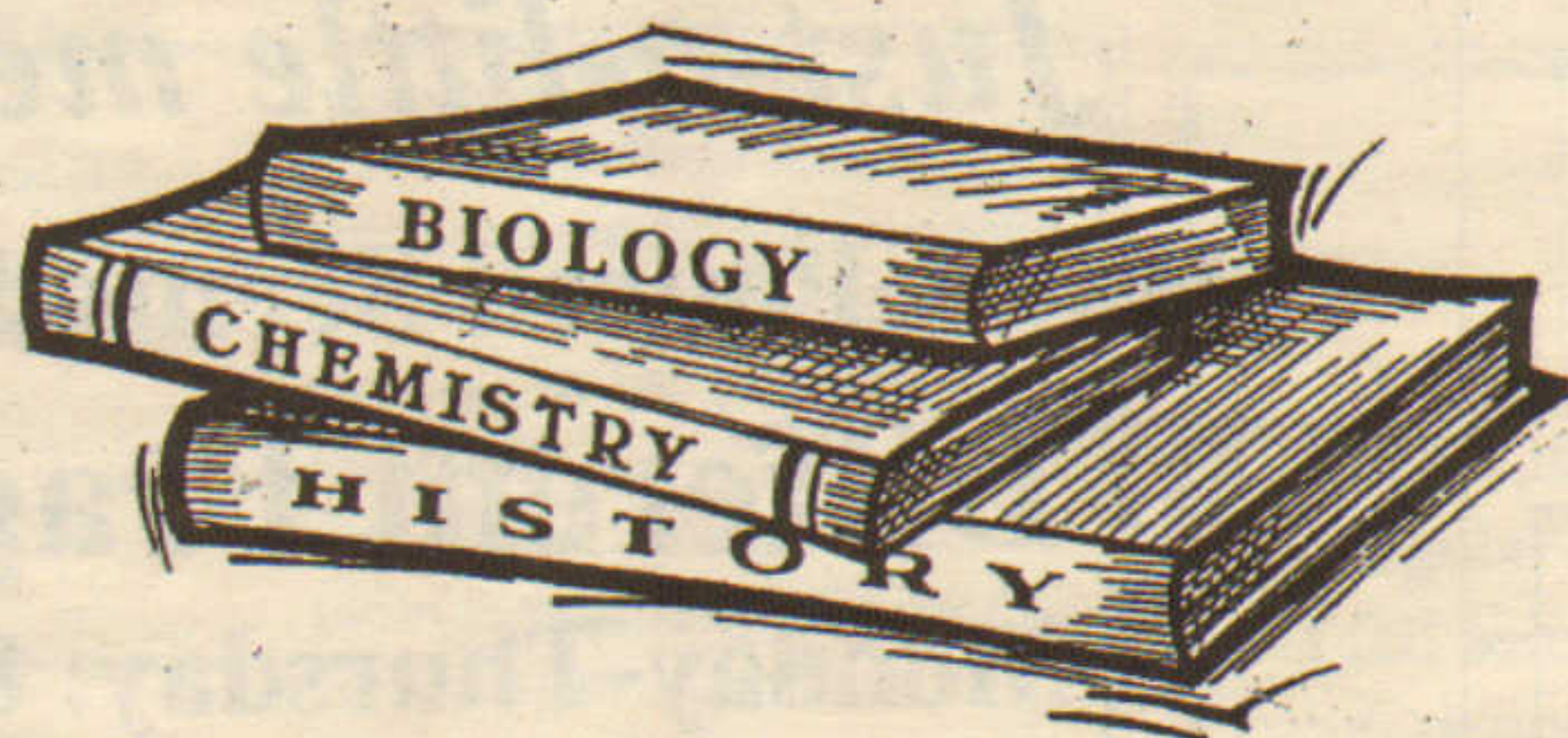
The old lady knew she was no longer in the car because she felt raindrops beating against her face. She opened her eyes and saw a car lying on its side. She tried to get up but her right foot was caught on something. When the old lady reached down to pry her foot away, she found two little hands clamped on her foot. She looked down to see a limp little body covered with mud.

Please God, please let it not be Maisha, the old lady thought. Let it be some other child. Maybe the other car had a little girl in it too. She desperately looked around for Maisha. Maisha's still in the car, the old lady decided. She pushed the little body away from her foot and ran towards the car.

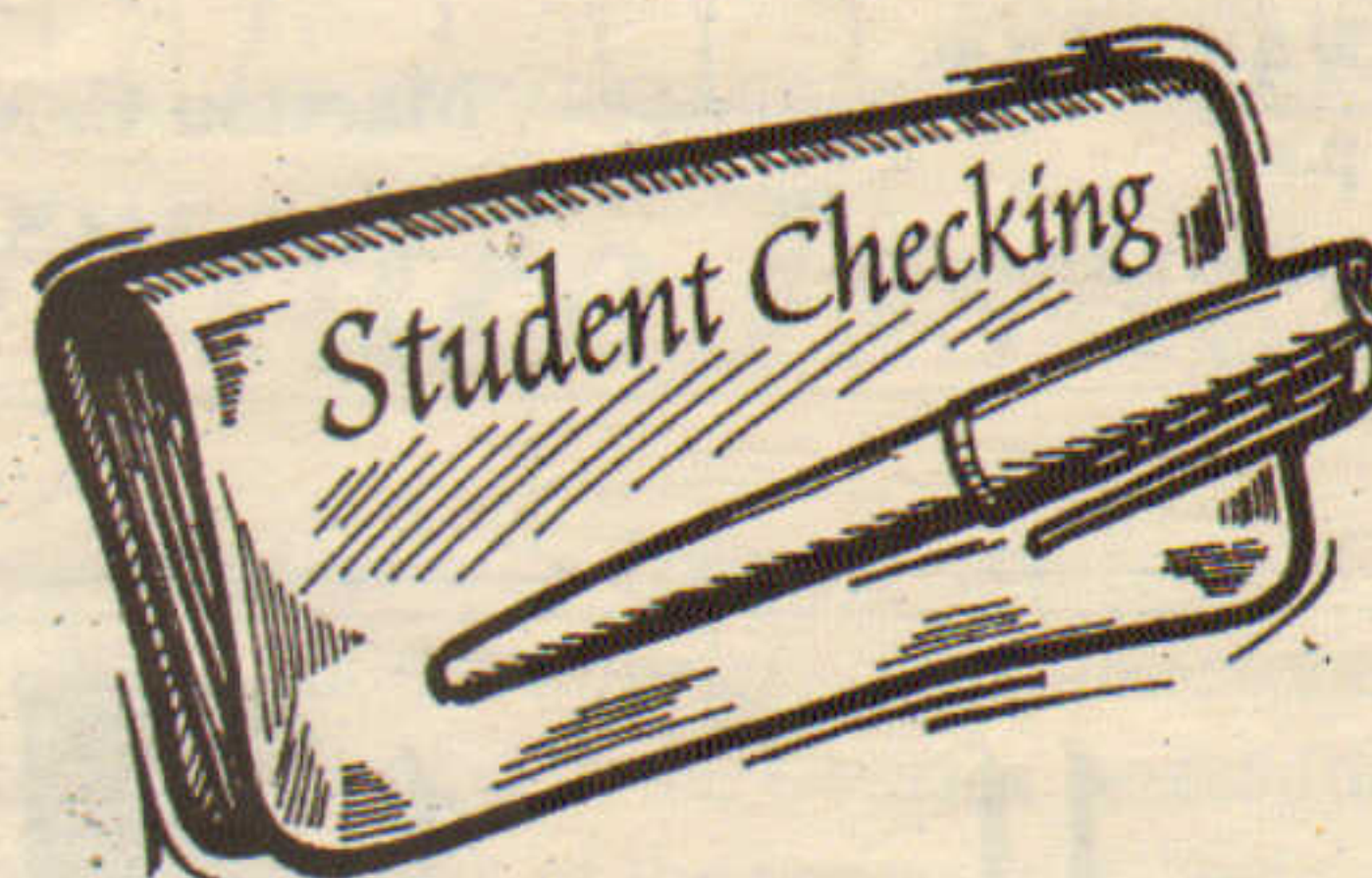
"Maisha! Maisha!" she called urgently. "I know you're in the car, child. Come out right now before Grandmama becomes angry."

"Maisha! Maisha!" she kept calling, ignoring the little body lying in the middle of the road.

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